

draw down to 2,500 troops and then everybody else would leave in 2021. In exchange, the Taliban said: We won't attack U.S. forces, and we will not advance on provincial capitals.

So when Joe Biden came to office, that was his reality. There were only a couple thousand troops left. The Taliban had gobbled up immense amounts of territory during the Trump administration, and they stood right outside of these capitals. Had Joe Biden chosen to walk away from that deal, hostilities would have begun between the United States and the Taliban. And I have listened to generals tell us for the last 10 years that there is no way that the United States could protect its own forces and stand up an effective Afghan military operation with less than 8,500. All of a sudden—all of a sudden—2,500 was enough, when for years the military was telling us, if you get down below 10,000, you are in big trouble.

But that doesn't even speak to the new reality that greeted us in 2021. That was the Taliban now not just out in the hinterlands, not just fighting for control of rural Afghanistan but on the precipice of these cities, ready to get involved in complicated, deadly, urban warfare. That argues for the number not being 8,500 but being twice that or three times that likely would have been necessary in order to buttress and stand up and support the Afghan military when street fighting happened inside these provincial capitals. Twenty-five hundred wasn't going to be enough.

Of course, the real desire for most of these "execute better" thinkers was for America to just stay. Now, I know folks bristle at this phrase "forever war." A lot of folks say that we should have kept 2,500, 5,000 there. They say that we weren't going to stay forever. They just say we should stay until we finish the job, which is defined as establishing an American-style representative government and an American-style unified military command. But if we couldn't accomplish that in 20 years—the longest U.S. war in history—why on Earth do we think that things would have changed after another 5 or another 10? My belief is that the goal that we set out was, unfortunately, impossible, which is why that PowerPoint slide reads, we stay in Afghanistan until it is stable; while reality reads, stay forever.

It is worth reminding that Americans overwhelmingly supported this plan to withdraw because they had seen how the plans never matched up with reality on the ground, and it was ultimately their sons' and daughters' blood that was going to be spilled. It was their money that was going to be spent.

The real danger is casually coming to this collective American conclusion that, just like our occupation was possible but executed poorly, that the withdrawal was simply a failure of planning, rather than an inevitability,

given the circumstances handed to President Biden and his team.

There are some military missions that cannot be completed, no matter how smart the planners are. This lesson has got to be learned or we are destined to suffer more Iraqs and more Afghanistans.

Finally, I will end with this: It is worth noting—and I said this earlier—that just because the mission we set out to achieve in Afghanistan was not possible, that that doesn't mean that everything else is impossible. That doesn't mean that America can't be a force for good in the world.

Our experience in Afghanistan is not a reason to disappear from global engagement. Just because this big thing wasn't possible doesn't mean that every big thing is impossible.

And so my hope is that by withdrawing from Afghanistan, we allow for the Biden administration and administrations to follow to be able to pivot to contests and fights that we can win, to put more effort into contesting Chinese expansionism, or to put more effort into providing nonmilitary aid to organic local democracy movements, or being more of a force for economic empowerment in the developing world. These are goals that are difficult, but they are achievable.

So there are plenty of negative consequences to our withdrawal from Afghanistan, but there are also beneficial consequences as well.

The greatest benefit is that we now have this energy and money and manpower that has been devoted to this failing mission for 20 years that can now be directed to these more achievable and more worthwhile goals, but only if we cure ourselves of this "execute better" mentality that is often connected to our military intervention. I think that is necessary so that America never again gets distracted from achievable goals by another impossible Afghanistan-like mission.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that after the first cloture vote on the Medina nomination, that the other three be 10-minute votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I know of no other debate before the Senate.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the

Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 324, Monica P. Medina, of Maryland, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Sheldon Whitehouse, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Catherine Cortez Masto, Christopher A. Coons, Ron Wyden, Margaret Wood Hassan, Edward J. Markey, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Angus S. King, Jr.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Monica P. Medina, of Maryland, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. Kaine), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 57, nays 26, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 381 Ex.]

YEAS—57

Baldwin	Hassan	Peters
Bennet	Heinrich	Portman
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Reed
Blunt	Hirono	Romney
Booker	Kelly	Rosen
Brown	King	Schatz
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schumer
Capito	Leahy	Shaheen
Cardin	Lujan	Sinema
Carper	Manchin	Smith
Casey	Markey	Stabenow
Collins	McConnell	Sullivan
Coons	Menendez	Tester
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Van Hollen
Crapo	Murkowski	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warnock
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Graham	Padilla	Wyden

NAYS—26

Barrasso	Ernst	Lankford
Boozman	Fischer	Lee
Braun	Grassley	Lummis
Cornyn	Hagerty	Marshall
Cotton	Hawley	Paul
Cramer	Hoehn	Sasse
Cruz	Hyde-Smith	

Scott (SC)
Shelby

Thune
Tuberville

Wicker
Young

NOT VOTING—17

Blackburn
Burr
Cassidy
Daines
Feinstein
Inhofe

Johnson
Kaine
Kennedy
Moran
Risch
Rounds

Rubio
Sanders
Scott (FL)
Tillis
Toomey

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On the vote, the yeas are 57, the nays are 26.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Monica P. Medina, of Maryland, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is my understanding we have three rollcall votes left and there is a 10-minute rule on the rollcall duration. Is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 331, Mary Catherine Phee, of Illinois, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs).

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Sheldon Whitehouse, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Catherine Cortez Masto, Christopher A. Coons, Ron Wyden, Margaret Wood Hassan, Edward J. Markey, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Angus S. King, Jr.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Mary Catherine Phee, of Illinois, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. Kaine), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 58, nays 25, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 382 Ex.]

YEAS—58

Baldwin
Bennet
Blumenthal
Blunt
Booker
Brown
Cantwell
Capito
Cardin
Carper
Casey
Collins
Coons
Cornyn
Cortez Masto
Crapo
Duckworth
Durbin
Gillibrand
Graham

Hassan
Heinrich
Hickenlooper
Hirono
Kelly
King
Klobuchar
Leahy
Lujan
Manchin
Markey
Menendez
Merkley
Murkowski
Murphy
Murray
Ossoff
Padilla
Peters
Portman

Reed
Romney
Rosen
Schatz
Schumer
Shaheen
Sinema
Smith
Stabenow
Sullivan
Tester
Van Hollen
Warner
Warnock
Warren
Whitehouse
Wyden
Young

NAYS—25

Barrasso
Boozman
Braun
Cotton
Cramer
Cruz
Ernst
Fischer
Grassley

Hagerty
Hawley
Hoeven
Hyde-Smith
Lankford
Lee
Lummis
Marshall
McConnell

Paul
Sasse
Scott (SC)
Shelby
Thune
Tuberville
Wicker

NOT VOTING—17

Blackburn
Burr
Cassidy
Daines
Feinstein
Inhofe

Johnson
Kaine
Kennedy
Moran
Risch
Rounds

Rubio
Sanders
Scott (FL)
Tillis
Toomey

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 59, the nays are 25.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Mary Catherine Phee, of Illinois, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs).

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the

Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 240, Todd D. Robinson, of New Jersey, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs).

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Sheldon Whitehouse, Brian Schatz, Debbie Stabenow, Catherine Cortez Masto, Christopher A. Coons, Ron Wyden, Margaret Wood Hassan, Edward J. Markey, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Angus S. King, Jr.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Todd D. Robinson, of New Jersey, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. Kaine) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 54, nays 29, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 383 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Baldwin
Bennet
Blumenthal
Booker
Brown
Cantwell
Capito
Cardin
Carper
Casey
Collins
Coons
Cornyn
Cortez Masto
Duckworth
Durbin
Gillibrand
Graham

Hassan
Heinrich
Hickenlooper
Hirono
Kelly
King
Klobuchar
Leahy
Lujan
Manchin
Markey
Menendez
Merkley
Murkowski
Murphy
Murray
Ossoff
Padilla

Peters
Portman
Reed
Romney
Rosen
Schatz
Schumer
Shaheen
Sinema
Smith
Stabenow
Tester
Van Hollen
Warner
Warnock
Warren
Whitehouse
Wyden

NAYS—29

Barrasso
Blunt

Boozman
Braun

Cotton
Cramer